2013

Decolonizing Childhood: Re-Reading Curious George, Oompa Loompas, and the Jungle Book

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Honors Thesis

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18 March 2013

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I am continuously excited and perplexed by the images included in elementary school textbooks. It seems as though in each picture, there is a multicultural representation of our culture: a Caucasian, an African-American, a Hispanic-American, an Asian and a Mid-Eastern, or some combination of shades of hair and skin color dominates. The visual smorgasbord is complemented by names of characters in the books: Guillermo, Maria, Zara, Sarah, Ming and Amir. What is perplexing however, is the underlying question of whether or not children are taught enough of concepts of multicultural awareness to function in their world? In an increasingly globalized world, the need to raise awareness and be sensitized to other cultures is somewhat of a matter of urgency. Yet, it appears that for most people, it is not until higher levels of education, and in most cases, college, that students are introduced to some of these ideas. Through literary textual analysis, this project, in part, argues to undo some of these existing pedagogies and to introduce children at much younger ages to the negotiations of cultural difference. For example, how would it be if children in second grade were taught not only the fun and creativity of Curious George but also to appreciate the power imbalances between the man in the yellow hat and George? Using some of these ideas as a premise, I argue that it is of paramount importance that we infuse existing elementary school curricula with postcolonial pedagogies.

The specter of empire haunts our lives in a fundamental way. The interactivity between western colonial powers and the once occupied colonies has yielded a rich body of literature. Recently, in the last thirty years, there has been the postcolonial field of study, and more specifically a connection between postcolonial studies and children's literature. There are in existence numerous novels and picture books that deal with colonial history, such as *The Little Princess, The Secret Garden,* and *Babar*, and many of these have inspired film adaptations. The three books I have chosen from among such canonical texts – *The Jungle* Book, *Curious George*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* - all address some of the complexities of the colonial encounter. Moreover, the biographical elements of each author, particularly their connection to empire, are worth noting and utilizing in our readings. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to include a thorough/complete analysis of the film adaptations of these books, I will draw upon the film texts as a way of heightening the visuality of the native Other.

Basis for Selection of Texts

As to the texts, allow me to explain why I selected the stories and excerpts from *The Jungle Book, The Complete Adventures of Curious George*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Each of these books was written at a historically diverse time, but with a specific link to colonialism and/or postcolonialism. The first selected text is *The Jungle Book* which was published in 1894 during the height of the British Empire, during the end of the Victorian Era. *The Jungle Book,* which takes place in British occupied India, focuses on the laws of the jungle as the natural law that allows all the animals to co-exist harmoniously through a system of respect for each other's uniqueness. Through the layers of relationships between the species of jungle animals and "man," this text speaks to the colonial ambivalence that postcolonial critic, Homi Bhabha theorizes where the natives (non-Europeans) are torn between their native world

and the new world in which they are forced to live. The harmony of living the jungle law is threatened by colonialists who employ colonial law which improves their own lives at the expense of the lives of the natives. In a fascinating study of his Twister-like dilemma, the character of Mowgli who has one foot in the Indian culture, one foot in the human culture, one hand in the animal world and one hand in the world of the oppressed, becomes confused and struggles with where his allegiance lies once he learns of his human roots.

Written just after World War II when Britain is forced to begin its exit strategies from many British colonies, *Curious George* mirrors the displacement and exile that natives feel being torn from their homes and placed in unfamiliar and inhospitable environments, forced to flee from countries they consider home, or who remain in countries so altered by British rule they feel foreign and unfamiliar. The *Curious George* stories have an appeal to the playful, mischievous side of children who can see themselves in George as he plays out his insatiable, childish curiosity. This text by way of its powerful images of displacement and exile with George as the colonized and the man with the yellow hat as an archetypal colonizer, make *Curious George* an appropriate text to introduce the postcolonial dilemmas of home and identity through various incidents surrounding George's forced transplantation from his jungle home into the city – a sort of man-made jungle.

Finally, the last of the three texts analyzed in this essay, Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* was published in 1964 after most British Colonies were returned to independence, and during the true postcolonial time period of many recently de-colonized countries. The postcolonial undertones specifically found in the Oompa Loompa characters potentially hints at Dahl's experiences fighting for the British during WWII. The Oompa Loompas in this novel exemplify the characteristic subaltern native in postcolonial theory as the

most subordinate to the colonizer who, in this case is Willie Wonka. The subaltern, as society's most inferior occupant, generally does not have a say in the outcomes of his or her own life, but instead is spoken for by his superiors. The nonsensical portrayal of the Oompa Loompas as suppressed natives who worship the inaccessible cacao bean, are forced out of fear to live in trees, and are rescued by a supremely intelligent white man who incidentally is in need of innumerable cacao beans, was simply too compelling to overlook. These books have built into them stories of colonial significance which provide effective representation of certain postcolonial theories. Before massaging postcolonial theoretical examples out of the texts and film adaptations, it is essential to have a basic understanding of the terminology of postcolonial theory.

The Context of Postcolonialism - Overview

Postcolonialism comes out of an anti-colonial movement of the late nineteenth into the mid-twentieth centuries and is a close relative of the more common ideas of multiculturalism which ideas are covered in the attached pedagogical appendix. The body of this paper will focus on the postcolonial analysis found specifically in close readings of the selected literary texts with the multicultural and pedagogical aspects primarily consigned to the appendix. Critic Pramod Nayar, in his book *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, more accurately defines colonialism as "the process of settlement by Europeans in Asian, African, South American, Canadian and Australian spaces" and describes it as a "violent appropriation and sustained exploitation of native races and spaces by European cultures" (Nayar 1). He defines the process as being a violent one because it was generally a military conquest and domination. Of course the natives did not want to be "conquered" when there was no battle existing. The colonialists created the battle with their presence, arrogance and suspicious intentions, one of which was

linked to the pilfering of natural resources. Initially, once the Europeans were settled in a conquered colony they would "make nice" by studying natives, learning all about their culture, language, education, vocations, art, histories, anthropologies and laws. They documented and chronicled these studies before altering the natives to their own European customs. They used the knowledge they had gained of the natives to gain power over them by speaking in the native tongue, showing improvements upon native ways and goods produced, and teaching them "better" ways of doing things they already did. In this slow and steady way of infiltrating the native lifestyle, there was less resistance. The colonizer's ways were enticing, the natives were curious, and before long transformation to European ways was accomplished. In this way the conquest was complete; a cultural conquest as well as a physical one.

It would be inaccurate to say that all European colonies suffered under colonialism. In the postcolonial period, not all former colonies were left bereft of functioning independence. Many colonies were vastly improved by the skills, government, education and overall organization that the Europeans brought and left with them. Simultaneously, the cultural payoff was tremendous, yet, they were culturally obliterated, their identities over time were erased, and after years and generations of being stripped of their culture, language and identity, they were abandoned by the imperialistic caretakers. In the wake of this abandonment, the exposed natives were left with doubt, lack of confidence, deficiency of knowledge and inadequate leadership to somehow organize, rebuild and re-create their newly independent country.

Postcolonialism Nuts and Bolts

Imperialism is the idea of colonial conquest, the practice of governance, whether through the physical settlement of a country or through control from afar without settlement. Nayar describes imperialism as the theory of domination and governance, and colonialism as the

practice, "where both are based on racial difference" (Nayar 2). Once nations were settled, conquered and studied, their findings were chronicled through discourse[1], which became a construction of the reality of these countries but only through the eyes of the colonizers, not the natives. Because of this discourse, the "truth" of what is known about colonized countries, cultures and subjects is only as portrayed by the colonizer, an outsider, or an historian. In Indian theorist Gayatri Spivak's essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she argues that subjects are constituted through discourse. An individual cannot develop an identity without being the subject of a discourse over which he she may have little or no control. Such a subject-subaltern cannot speak, and must be spoken for by scrupulous historians" (94). The colonizer's may or may not have been considered scrupulous historians, and thus the discourse that is available about the subjects to be studied must be viewed through some skepticism and knowledge that the element of "truth" is skewed according to whose truth it is: The perceived truth of the colonizer? The silenced subaltern? Who is doing the speaking and from what perspective?

Another component of colonialism is the resources of the land or people that were desired by the Europeans. After the European ruling country returned political power to the native people – which could have been after several generations have passed – many natives and countries were left with chaos and without structure. This is the period of postcolonialism, which Nayar refers to as "the historical and material conditions of formerly colonized Asian, African and South American nations … and the economic and political conditions … after the European ruler handed over political power to the native population" (Nayar 3). Thus, postcolonialism is a discourse of liberation during a time of rebuilding a nation. Anti-colonialism is a movement against colonialism, and postcolonialism follows on its heels. Colonialism is a cruel process of taking over the native populations, erasing their identity, their traditions, and their unique

[1] Writings.

cultural heritage in an attempt to mold them into Europeans in how they act, what they read, what language is spoken, what is worn, and their music. Postcolonial theory makes these axes of oppression visible and seeks to find ways in which true liberation sovereignly may be possible. We see the damage that is done when people are stripped of their culture, their uniqueness, their talents and their ideas. This process can occur in ways other than colonialism. It can be done here and now in America – in any diverse country, by refusing to acknowledge and legitimize other cultures different from our own. If today's educators are aware of the history of colonialism as well as the discourse of postcolonialism and the impact these have had upon many cultures, they may foster sensitivities in students to become transcultural-minded[2], which is to say to have an understanding of people from diverse backgrounds.

Why Children's Literature?

These seemingly innocuous children's classics, read through the lens of postcolonial theory reveal cultural power imbalances that may help to sensitize the current generation to be able to negotiate cultural differences rather than try to transform them. Children's literature is an appropriate text to analyze given the simplistic representation of deep and complex cultural concepts. In postcolonial[3] discourse, colonized natives are sometimes described as child-like natives due to their inferior position to the colonizer who takes a hegemonic[4] parental role. Natives are also referred to as primitive or savage. These labels bring to mind a common visual depiction of natives similar to that found in a certain scene in the 2005 film adaptation, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, wherein the natives in Loompaland are wearing grass skirts,

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[2] "The concept of a rational *self*, capable of learning and appreciating difference, entails the possibility of standing apart, not just from *others*, but from oneself as well as one's group. The ability and willingness to stand apart are the necessary conditions for genuine personal integrity" (Wagner 424).

[3] Colonialism is the study of European nations and the non-European nations they colonized. Postcolonialism is the study of that relationship and what was left of the non-European nation after the colonizer left.

[4] Ruling or supreme (OED)

elaborate headdresses, shaking instruments and dancing around a fire to a drumbeat. The first definition of "primitive" in the Oxford English Dictionary is "a first born child or animal." Further, the Oxford English Dictionary defines "savage" as "in a state of nature; wild." I have often heard it said to lively children, "you are behaving like a bunch of wild Indians!" Unsure of the origin of this phrase, it is imperialistic to assume "Indians" are "wild," and furthermore, who determines this behavior is anything other than culturally normal? The commonness of this phrase attached to children speaks to the deep-ingrained ideas of the child-like perception of natives to the present. Children's literature is often written like a parable. Parables are simple stories that teach a moral or principle. Unlike parables, however, many children's stories are unreal, fabricated, or mythical more like a fable. The book selections in this essay are written in this combination style of parable/fable making them interesting to the juvenile reader, while teaching important moral ideas. Therefore when reading these stories with a postcolonial perspective, the moral ideas of postcolonial theory are coaxed out to illustrate certain specific ideas as we will find in this analysis.

Colonial Ambivalence Defined in *The Jungle Book*

Written during the height of British Imperialist rule of India, in Rudyard Kipling's, *The Jungle Book*, is found a complicated colonialist structure. The author's background as the son of British parents born in British ruled India and raised part-time in India and part-time in England, impacts the perspective of colonial ambivalence found in *Jungle Book*. The stories within *Jungle Book* explore the idea of colonial ambivalence when torn between the two worlds the colonized occupy. In this book, there is the jungle animal kingdom living under Jungle Law[5], and the colonizer living under colonial law. The man-cub, Mowgli, who is adopted into and raised by the

[5] The law taught to all Jungle dwelling creatures allowing them to live together with respect and honor to each other. It is a list of things one can and cannot do in and around the jungle `to keep them all safe.

wolf pack emphasizes colonialist ideas in that regardless of who has raised him, he is still a man, and according to Jungle Law, off limits for hunting. According to Jopi Nyman in her article "Re-Reading Rudyard Kipling's 'English' Heroism: Narrating Nation in *the Jungle Book*," those animals who obey this jungle law represent "good" natives, but those who desire to breach this law, such as Shere Khan, represent "bad" natives (Nyman 5). If this jungle law is breached, and man is killed by animals, the colonial law will prevail and punishment will come in the "arrival of white men on elephants, with guns, and hundreds of brown men with gongs and rockets and torches" (Kipling 4). This intervention of colonial law into the breach of the Jungle Law is where these two laws overlap.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "ambivalence" as "the coexistence of one person of contradictory emotions or attitudes (as love and hatred) towards a person or thing." We refer to this in common terms as a "love/hate relationship." Pramod Nayar, speaking of post-colonial theory expert Homi Bhabha, says this of colonial ambivalence: "Bhabha argues that the fetish/phobia structure of colonial relations results in a condition where the white man both fears *and* desires the Other (the black or brown native), while at the same time wishes to erase the difference. The colonizer is both fascinated by the difference and also repulsed by it" (Nayar 27). This feeling of fear and desire can exist for both the colonizer about the natives and for the natives about the colonizer. The native severely mistrusts the intentions of the colonizer who steals his home and land, but the native may also work for the colonizer becoming dependent on him for food, shelter and safety. On the other hand, the colonizer needs the native to provide a workforce, or geographical knowledge, but at the same time the colonizer does not trust the native or fears for his safety when he must rely on the native. The story of "Rikki Tikki Tavi" within *The Jungle Book*, helps to explain this concept of fascination and repulsion. In the story, a

mongoose, Rikki Tikki Tavi, and other jungle animals, specifically cobras Nag and Nagaina, represent the colonized natives. Colonial ambivalence as defined by Bhabha, is exhibited by the British mother towards Rikki Tikki Tavi. After the British family has revived the nearly dead mongoose, they let him run in and out of the house, and on and around their son, Teddy. The mother believes he is tame only because they showed him kindness. Before she goes to bed at night she looks in on Teddy to see him asleep with the wide awake mongoose on his pillow. His mother says to the father, "I don't like that, ... he may bite the child"(Kipling 133). This statement reveals her fear or repulsion from the "native." When the father reassures her that he's extremely safe with the mongoose, especially if a snake comes into the nursery, the mother cuts him off unable to shake off her fear of not only the mongoose, but now of the possibility of snakes (another "native"). On the one hand she fears the native might bite her child, but that changes later in the story after the mongoose has saved the family by killing the cobras that threatened to kill them. She once again came into Teddy's room to check on him late at night. When she saw Rikki Tikki Tavi this time, she said, "He saved our lives and Teddy's life" (153), no longer repulsed by the native, but now fascinated. The mother's ambivalence is displayed initially in her distrust at the differences of the native mongoose and the threat he poses to her son, but then later she is attracted to the mongoose because his ability to protect her family.

Taken to a deeper level of analysis, there are colonial subplots within "Rikki Tikki Tavi" that allow for further thought particularly on the complex relationships between natives and colonizer and between natives and natives. Because the mongoose is revived from near death by the son of the colonizer, he shows a loyalty to the boy as his devoted servant and protector, although one can argue that the mongoose is simply doing what he is instinctually designed to do – kill snakes. Furthermore, in protecting the child, he is in a broader sense protecting the interests

of the colonizer. When the snakes, Nag and Nagaina, enter the story, they try to extinguish the British family, and more particularly the British lineage by attacking the son of the British colonizer. Similarly, when the mongoose goes after the cobras, he also goes after the cobras eggs. In the triumvirate battle between colonizer and native (the British family and the cobra), and between "good" native (mongoose) and "bad" native (cobra), the power struggle is over which lineage will move forward and which will end, the colonizer or the native. The mongoose has crushed all the cobras' eggs except one. He holds the last egg between his paws on the porch where Nagaina, the female cobra, is holding Teddy, the only child of the British couple, in his steady gaze within deadly striking distance (Kipling 149). Here is an example of ambivalence – the cobra despises the mongoose for killing her eggs, but she must rely on the mongoose who possesses has her last egg to turn it over to her in order to preserve her lineage. Although to the colonizer the mongoose plays a heroic role, to the natives he may be seen as a traitor, or a colonial sympathizer and looked down upon by the other natives. In this way, can the mongoose really be labeled the "good" native? Likewise, you can argue that the cobra is instinctually protecting her lineage and trying to expel the infringing white man, so can she be a "bad" native? Although Kipling's story sympathizes with the British family, the theoretical analysis of colonial relationships is arguable within this text as to who is preying upon whom and who should be protected, emphasizing the complexities of colonial ambivalence.

Jungle Law vs. Colonial Law

The "Law of the Jungle" as referenced throughout *The Jungle Book* is not specifically defined in the book other than to say that "the Law of the Jungle, which never orders anything without reason, forbids every beast to eat Man except when he is killing to show his children how to kill" (Kipling 4). In a sense, the jungle, which is primarily for the survival, safety,

fairness and co-existence of the Jungle dwellers, is counterposed to colonial or civilized laws which revolve around the maintenance of class and caste systems in order to preserve the sovereignty of the Empire. Examples of jungle laws in the story are, "how to tell a rotten branch from a sound one" to prevent falling from a tree; or, "how to speak politely to the wild bees when he came upon a hive of them fifty feet above ground" so as not to be attacked (32). The Jungle Law is faithfully taught to all children of the Jungle so as to keep them safe and help them coexist with one another. Those who do not regard the Jungle Law are considered the "bad natives" because their actions bring danger to others. The importance of colonial law is that within this structure, certain useful natives are safe from the colonizers who considered those animals of use to them, giving them a place, although always maintaining otherness status and with the interests of Empire always in the forefront. This leads us to wonder under which law Mowgli falls as a man cub – "man" being human, and "cub" as non-human.

Ambivalence of Mowgli

Mowgli, while growing up in the Jungle, retained "otherness" status in that he was, and always would be, a man cub. His acceptance into the Jungle was hinged on the acceptance by Baloo and Bagheera (Kipling 12). Defending his belief that he fit in with the wolves, Mowgli said, "I was born in the Jungle. I have obeyed the Law of the Jungle, and there is no wolf of ours from whose paws I have not pulled a thorn. Surely they are my brothers" (18). Mowgli cannot understand why he is not accepted by his brothers in the pack when he has been acting as one of them and faithfully served them throughout his young life. The answer to his inquiry is not a satisfying one, but it is one to which youth can relate. Mowgli is not accepted simply because he is a man. It is because he has the ability to pull thorns from their feet – something they cannot do themselves – that they cannot accept him outside of what he does for them (19). This

demonstrates another sort of ambivalence in that Mowgli as a man is useful to the animals to be able to do something for them, but because he is a man he can never be accepted as one of them. He will never be an animal. This is a poignant part of the book that would be a thought-provoking and relevant writing topic for students to contemplate: what things make us different that are entirely out of our control? Do those differences still get in the way of bringing people together?

In Mowgli's further representation of ambivalence, Jopi Nyman suggests that Mowgli represents the natives (colonized) as a brother to the wolves, and as the colonizers because he is human (Nyman 213-214). The text supports this idea in the words of "Mowgli's Song" which he sings after killing the enemy, Shere Khan, and after being stoned by the human villagers, and thus cast out. He sings, "As Mang flies between the beasts and the birds/so I fly between the village and the Jungle/Why?" Mowgli represents the native in animal form, and the colonizer in his human form. He further sings, "These two things fight together in me as the snakes fight in the spring/ ... Why/I am two Mowglis" (Kipling 98). As to his personal ambivalence, Mowgli feels the divide as to how he fits into both the colonizer and the colonized, but at the same time is accepted by neither. This begs the question as to why Mowgli felt a kinship to the humans and also a kinship to the wolves when their two worlds were divided and illustrates the sensitivities of natives in colonized countries who wanted to please the colonizer yet still fit in with native peers.

Colonial Heirarchy

This books' illustration of higher colonialist ideas allows an expansion of thought about the role of colonialist as punisher and the types of natives – good and bad – who either uphold or challenge colonial law. It further teaches the colonialist hierarchy in the conversation between a

native officer with a visiting Afghan chief in answer to the chief's question, "Are the beasts as wise as the men?" (Kipling 211). The officer answers:

> "They obey, as the men do. Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier his general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress. Thus it is done." (Kipling 211-212).

This passage explains that the natives, whether beast or human, are all subject to the queen at whatever level of command they may be, and delves into how colonialism takes control of the natives and the native laws. It also serves as a precursor to understanding the postcolonial idea that when the colonialist permanently leaves the colonized country, chaos follows in his wake. The formerly colonized country is left without structure, hierarchy, sometimes skills and resources. The passages and stories within *The Jungle Book* present higher level thinking on colonial and postcolonial thought, integrating animal natives with human natives to break down the laws that exist alongside colonial law, such as Jungle Law. The stories further deal with the "otherness" of certain characters like Shere Khan, who is within the animal kingdom, but not a follower of Jungle Law, and thus seen by the animals as the "other" within their own realm.

Toomai of the Elephants as Depiction of Native Heirarchy

In the chapter entitles, "Toomai of the Elephants," Kala Nag is an elephant who has served the Government of India for 47 years. He served in battle, he carried tents and mortar, hauled timber, and eventually trained to help catch wild elephants. The elephants were valued and protected by the Indian Government:"There is one whole department which does nothing

else but hunt them, catch them, and break them in, and send them up and down the country as they are needed for work" (Kipling 158). The mahout people hunted the elephants, worked with them, broke them in and trained them. In this chapter, the relationship between the elephants and the Indian Government sets up a colonial arrangement with the elephant as the native and the Indian Government as the colonizer. The government has found that these elephants are extremely useful in a multitude of capacities due to their size and strength. So while they are not hunted for meat or for the ivory of their tusks, they are hunted and captured nevertheless and made to work in servitude for the duration of their lives. The elephants are respected by their trainers while bullied into submission. There is a particular scene in this chapter that demonstrates that even though the captured elephants may be taken care of, fed and groomed, they would still rather be out with the wild elephants living in their own way. The master of the entire elephant hunting operation is Petersen Sahib. He is described by Little Toomai (son of the master trainer) as "the greatest white man in the world" (164). The much revered "dance of the elephants" is talked of by the mahout people and Peterson Sahib, but never before witnessed until one night when Little Toomai is carried by his beloved Kala Nag to a place in the forest and joined by many wild elephants. There he witnesses the dance of the elephants that no man had seen before. Although Kala Nag had been in servitude to the government for 47 years, this was an effective illustration of the preservation of culture by the natives, when the serving native joins the free natives in a cultural display.

Elephants in the movie are led by Colonel Hathi (which in Hindi means "elephant"), the head elephant. This scene in the film does not display a show of the natives' attempt to preserve their culture. In the book the elephants are given great importance to the British Indian military efforts, so much so that the elephants are revered and the catching, training and keeping of them

has its own governmental department. This scene in the film depicts the elephants as silly bumbling fools who cannot follow the simplest military maneuver commands. This, however, represents another perception of natives as useless and unskilled natives, given menial tasks simply to occupy them. In the film, when Mowgli is detected in the scene with the elephants he is immediately rejected by them as a man-cub. In the book, Little Toomai is accepted by the elephants and feared as a trainer. The hierarchy of natives is stated in the book with the native Indian trainers holding a higher position than the native elephants. In the movie, the native elephants reject the native Indian. Though the book and the movie adaptation have chosen different ways to represent the interaction between natives and humans as well as natives and natives, the undertones of colonial ambivalence are found in both. The stories within *The Jungle Book* are illustrative of the dependence and rejection the colonizer and colonized have on each other. They demonstrate the love/hate relationship that cannot be escaped in the quasi-dependence they have on one another. While this text focuses on colonial relationships, *Curious George* focuses on the more personal aspect of identity of the natives, and the impact the colonizer has on the sense of and loss of identity.

Curious George: Displacement and Exile of the Natives

H.A. and Margret Rey, the co-authors of the *Curious George* series of books, as Jews were exiled from Paris to Spain and eventually to the United States, just before the Nazis occupied Paris. With their personal backgrounds including their exile and time living in the jungles of Brazil, it stands to reason that the overarching postcolonial themes found in their *Curious George* books are displacement and exile. Reading *Curious George* lends itself too easily to a post-colonial reading: the "man with the yellow hat," who is unnamed throughout the series, as the colonizer and George as the colonized native. The first illustration of the first book

jumps into this theme when it shows an illustration of a smiling monkey eating a banana sitting in the hammock-like vine in a tree (Rey 5). The text that accompanies this illustration states, "This is George. He lived in Africa. He was a good little monkey and always very curious" (Rey 4). The illustration on the following page shows the "man in the yellow hat" hiding behind a tree with a gun over his shoulders, a camera around his neck, spying on George through binoculars. Part of the text accompanying this illustration is the man in the yellow hat who is watching the monkey and says, "What a nice little monkey … I would like to take him home with me" (Rey 6-7). The attitude of the colonizer shows up through the man in the yellow hat because he simply decides what he wants, without thought as to how it will impact the native. He sees the monkey, thinks it is cute and wants to take him home. He is not depicted as a tortured miserable monkey, but a happy and contented one. Incidentally, in the 2006 movie adaptation directed by Matthew O'Callaghan, George is depicted as a curious[6] monkey in the jungle who is consistently getting into trouble in the jungle by the older jungle animals because he causes mischief with the young jungle animals. He is depicted as being rejected by the older jungle animals and living a lonely and dejected life in the jungle. In this adaptation, George is shown as the "other" within the jungle. In the book, the man in the yellow hat (the colonizer), lures the contended George with his curiosity about his hat until he has the chance to grab George, "pop" him into a bag, and take him to a large boat where he sits him down and says, "George, I am going to take you to a big Zoo in a big city. You will like it there" (Rey 14). The question begs to be asked why the zoo? George was already in the jungle – the real jungle – where he had everything he needed and

[6] George's curiosity is portrayed as a bad thing in both the text and in the movie adaptation. His curiosity is the source of trouble for the monkey and often the man in the yellow hat. However, through his curiosity, George obtains knowledge about his new home, the city, and about the people that surround him. One great fear of the colonizer was that by educating the natives, they would gain enough knowledge to become discontent with their inferior status. Through education, they may find a voice and revolt. It can be argued that George's curiosity was a good thing because it allowed him to learn of his surroundings and become more independent and capable, but from a colonizer's perspective, the outcome of such curiosity would be hazardous to their purpose.

everything he already understood. But these questions were not considered during colonization. The colonizer saw something he wanted and he knew how to go about getting it. This scene in book gives a simple but effective illustration visually and textually, of the colonizer deciding where home will be for the native without regard to what the native thinks. He unilaterally decides George would be happy in the zoo. And because the man in the yellow hat sees the monkey and wants it, he takes it.

Natives' Struggle with Identity

In the stories, the readers see a pattern of George getting into mischief, being misunderstood, escaping capture, and in the end becoming a hero; through a postcolonial lens, this pattern is different. In this series of pictures books about George, there is a repeated effort of George trying to escape capture and being chased by white men, echoing his capture in Africa. The theme of exile is found in each of the *Curious George* stories as noted by June Cummins, a professor of children's literature, in her article *The Resisting Monkey: 'Curious George,' Slave Captivity Narratives, and the Postcolonial Condition.* She observes that in each story, "George gets into trouble because he is as yet uncontrolled, undisciplined, uncivilized. He then saves the day in some way and gains the praise but not necessarily the respect of society, virtually always represented by white male adults" (Cummins 70). George is displaced from his home culture, the jungle in Africa, and exiled into a new culture, the urban jungle where he is without keys, language, or knowledge of the laws, rules, and society. By taking him out of the jungle, society expects him to follow the rules of the new culture which is unfamiliar and unnatural. Story after story repeats these themes, and with each story comes opportunity to explore how it would feel to be removed from all that is familiar. Many children readers would already be acquainted with this misfortune in their own home circumstances.

In his new culture, George is expected to conform to his new society automatically, as a sort of self-actualized reformation. In colonialism, one of the duties of the colonizer is to study, document and then erase the native culture in order to "reform" the natives to the colonizer's superior civilized culture in their imperialistic quest for domination. For the natives, this removal from their known culture and immersion into the imperial culture causes an erasure of identity and brings confusion among the natives as to who they are and where they belong. This identity confusion is found in *Curious George Takes a Job*. In this particular story, George's endearing curiosity leads him to finding a job as a window washer. While washing windows he sees men painting a room. When the painters leave for lunch, George climbs through the window and starts painting. The scene George paints on the walls and furniture is of a jungle with palm trees, zebras, giraffes, leopards and, most significantly, a partially completed George climbing a tree. While painting himself into this scene, the painters walk in and George runs away from the white men and women chasing him. The illustration in this scene is critical because you see that the painting of George on the wall is not yet complete. George is not complete, ever, in any of his books. He is fractured between the jungle and the zoo (represented by the big city as well as the actual zoo). He was taken from his natural home and he will never be complete until he and his home are reunited. This scene is poignant in that it brings to light the identity confusion colonized natives feel when their culture is torn from them and they are placed in a new and unfamiliar culture. In painting the room, George is able to re-create his home and just as he starts to put himself back into his home, he is forced to abruptly leave it once again.

<u>Natives' Mimicry of Colonizer</u>

In an effort to assimilate, in the film adaptation, when they get to the city, the man in the yellow hat is carrying George through the city and he tells him, "act natural and try to blend in."

George then goes about literally mimicking people he sees. In his book *Postcolonial Theory, Contexts, Practices, Politics,* Bart Moore-Gilbert states of Homi Bhabha's 1984 essay "Of Mimicry and Man" that "the colonizer requires of the colonized subject that s/he adopt the outward forms and internalize the values and norms of the occupying power. ... to transform the colonized culture by making it copy or repeat the colonizer's culture" (Moore-Gilbert 120). The natives used mimicry to learn the ways of the colonizer particularly when things did not make sense. But there were opportunities for role reversal in the film. There are many situations where George is the one teaching the man in the yellow hat about the world that he does not know, such as the stars, fireflies and even survival skills like making a bed of leaves to stay warm during the night. In a traditional colonial aspect, the man in the yellow hat is depicted as having academic knowledge, but the native demonstrates practical knowledge. Although George is displaced and exiled, he has the skills to survive in these surroundings. However, when the man in the yellow hat is in Africa, he has no survival skills and finds his book knowledge useless. He has guides with him to show him the way. And even back in the city, George becomes a tour guide so to speak to the man in the yellow hat. When colonizers were first taking over countries, they, too, had to rely on the natives to learn to navigate their way through the new lands. They were able to find natives who would willingly serve the colonizer as a form of survival, Besides displacement and exile, *Curious George* depicts the natives' challenges in holding on to identity in several of the Curious George stories.

Identity of a Name and a Voice

The identity aspect of one's name is shown in the film adaptation. Children intrigued by the monkey ask the man in the yellow hat what his monkey's name is. The man answers that he doesn't need to have a name. It is as if he is saying that he is only a monkey and therefore has no

identity other than being a monkey. When they insist upon his having a name, the man tells them to just call him George. He did not say "his name is George." To the colonizer, the natives were seen as a whole rather than a group of individuals. Names were not important because their identities were not important to the colonizer. Similarly, you may argue that the man in the yellow didn't have a name either, at least to George. But in many native cultures, names are attached to vocations or descriptions, in which case the "man in the yellow hat" is his name by his description. This identity concept is one of the colonial concepts founds in *Curious George Takes a Job*. In additional to identity, this story also demonstrates that colonialists had ulterior motives for the places they colonized. Colonizers desired natural resources such as sugar cane, coffee, tobacco, or manual labor. Towards the end of this story, there is an example of the colonizer commodifying George when the man with the yellow hat finds George has landed in the hospital after injuring himself running from the painters. The concerned man with the yellow hat calls the hospital and says, "Please take good care of him so that he will get better quickly. I want to take him to a movie studio and make a picture about his life in the jungle" (Rey 91). This is an example of the colonizer using a native to get something else he wants. In the story, it was fame and fortune, but in colonized countries it was often other commodities, even slavery. Children readers are much more malleable than adult readers and thus may empathize with the injured monkey while observing that the man in the yellow hat is mainly concerned with George's earning potential. This is also an illustration of the fact that George has no say when it comes to the desires of the man with the yellow hat. As a non-human George cannot express himself. In colonialism, the natives' language was often erased overnight and the European language was the only approved language. This left the natives instantly without a voice or a feeling of humanity.

In current postcolonial discourse, the voice of the colonized is beginning to emerge, but most of what is known about colonized countries is still from the voice of the colonizer rather than that of the colonized because they are silenced. George does not get a voice because his stories are told from a narrator. In *Curious George Gets a Medal,* George receives a letter in the mail, but must wait for the man in the yellow hat to get home to read it to him. George decides to write a letter, but does not know how. Of course his attempt gets him into trouble, but his desire to write sheds insight into the colonized natives, whose language is removed when they are forced to learn a new language, thus losing all ability to adequately communicate. By stripping natives of language, they are also stripped of voice. In the Reys' stories, George is the victim of racism by the man in the yellow hat, who takes George for his own entertainment, representing the cultural or exotic other as we observe George trying to navigate his way through a vastly different culture than his jungle home. Although we touched upon George's potential status as a commodified other, a more complete example of the economic other is found in the story of the Oompa Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.*

The Subaltern Ooompa Loompas

Before studying the economic otherness of the Oompa Loompas, we must solidify our understanding of the colonial subaltern for purposes of this textual analysis. The OED defines "subaltern" as "a person ... of inferior rank or status; a subordinate. Now chiefly in critical and cultural theory, esp. post-colonial theory: a member of a marginalized or oppressed group." This term has become synonymous with postcolonial theory. Not all natives were subaltern. Some natives were highly valued by the colonizer for their use and knowledge as far as they could assist the colonizer with whatever agenda they may have had. But those natives whose intellect and knowledge were not needed, were the oppressed, subordinate natives. The Oompa Loompas

in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* provides a rich and diverse lesson on the subaltern[7]. In this story, while touring the chocolate factory, the children catch sight of the Oompa Loompas for the first time across the river. The children notice they are "little people" with funny long hair when Charlie states, "But they can't be *real* people" (Dahl 68). Because the subaltern has no voice, they are often seen as less than human. In this passage Charlie has unwittingly classified the Oompa Loompas as the "other" even casting them as not human simply because they look different – they are short and have long hair. In the 1971 film adaptation titled *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, the Oompa Loompas are played by dwarf actors whose skin is colored orange, to further differentiate them from "regular" people. European colonialists saw natives in much the same way as the children in this story, treating them as if they were not human, by gawking at and abusing them – after all, they are not human and therefore have no proper feelings. To take this de-humanizing effect further, in the 2005 film adaptation titled *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the Oompa Loompas are played by only one actor, an Indian actor named Deep Roy, who is then duplicated by computer so that each Oompa Loompa is exactly identical - computer-generated. These three depictions of the Oompa Loompas reiterates the colonialist perspective that natives were viewed as inhuman simply because they look different from others, or in the last case, because each one is identical to each other and thus viewed as a whole rather than as individuals.

Dehumanization of the Subaltern

Further evidence of the dehumanization of the natives follows as Mr. Wonka gives a brief background of the Oompa Loompas whom he "imported" from Loompaland (Dahl 68). First of all, the use of the word "imported" immediately sets up the Oompa Loompas as commodities to

[7] In postcolonial theory the subaltern is the subordinate, or lower class, who is usually not granted his own voice, but must be spoken for by their superiors.

be imported and exported. Colonialism was a capitalistic endeavor where the Europeans profited extensively from the natural resources of the colonies. In some countries the commodity was people and labor. While listening to Mr. Wonka's explanation as to Loompaland, Mrs. Salt declares that there is no such place as Loompaland, citing her authority as a teacher of geography, the insinuation being that if the European colonialist as the teacher of the natives does not know about its existence, then it must not exist. During the period of colonialism, it is the European colonialist that effectively put a nation on a map. A nation is not acknowledged as having any importance or significance until the Europeans decide it is worth occupying, taking over the natural resources, and thus giving it value to the world. By its imperialist takeover of a nation, Britain, or so they thought, brought such resource-rich countries into being, and through colonial discourse, again speaking for the subaltern, informed the empire of the country and its people.

Commodification of Natives

The version of these colonized countries with which the world became acquainted, however, was a colonialized imperial version which was created through the colonial discursive process of stripping down the natives and their culture, and reforming them to the British standards, and another stripping was an economic stripping and reformation according to the goods or services that served the Empire. In the case of Mr. Wonka, he lured the Oompa Loompas out of their country, brought them to his "country" – the factory – and reformed them to his purpose – labor and cacao beans. He describes Loompaland as a jungle that is infested with dangerous beasts who eat Oompa Loompas. He further denigrates their culture by painting them as poor, helpless and starving beings who are forced to live in tree houses to escape the beasts, starving to death on their diet of detestable caterpillars (Dahl 69). Mr. Wonka sets himself up as

their savior, saving them from their own country and culture that he decided, and then convinced them, was inferior. He further observes that the Oompa Loompas are forced to spend their days climbing trees looking for good things to mash up with their caterpillars to make them taste more palatable; however, he claims they are unable to access the cacao beans – something they long for and even worship (Dahl 69-70). This is where the truth comes out: Like the European colonialist, Mr. Wonka conquers a people, in this case the Oompa Loompas, in order to obtain a valuable substance, cacao beans. Mr. Wonka justifies his takeover of Loompaland, creating his own colonial discourse by painting the Oompa Loompas as natives who need saving from their own doom. Mr. Wonka, as their savior, "gives them" access to the cacao bean by paying them in cacao beans for their work in his factory. The colonialist absurdity is that if the Oompa Loompas spent their days climbing trees looking for something to eat, it would stand to reason that they could certainly climb a cacao tree and get the cacao pods that house the beans with ease. (Having climbed such a tree myself, they are not difficult to scale.) The truth as far as the novel is concerned, is that Mr. Wonka aptly fulfilled the role of European colonialist and slave trader all in one by shipping the Oompa Loompas in packing crates with breathing holes, bringing them to his factory where they lead happy lives full of singing, dancing, and English lessons. He further degrades them by stating that even after all his hard work of bringing them to the factory, teaching them English and providing for them, they are still mischievous, deer-skin-and-leaf-wearing natives – but at least the women get fresh leaves to wear every day (Dahl 71). The wearing of the deer skins and leaves underscores the colonial idea that the natives cannot be fully reformed, or perhaps it could demonstrate the Oompa Loompas' strong desire to hold on to their individualism, their culture. These two potential conclusions could provide a lively debate.

Empire and Nationalism in Loompaland

Roald Dahl also gives us ample opportunity here to teach the ideology of empire and colonialism[8], most specifically of nation and nationalism. Nationalism here is referring to those cultural signifiers such as language, music and symbols that represent the nation. In the passage referenced above of the Oompa Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* the Oompa Loompas had their own language, Oompa Loompish, which Mr. Wonka uses to speak to them. This tracks the colonialist method of first learning all they can about the native culture before infiltration and reform. Mr. Wonka already knows their language, he knows their habits, he knows what they value above anything else – cacao beans – and he is prepared for any opposition they may pose that could stand in his way of getting what he wants. Mr. Wonka, as the paternalistic figure, epitomizes the civilizing mission[9] binary of postcolonial thought whereby the colonizer serves as the teacher, master and parent, and the native as the pupil, servant, and child (Nayar 38). In this role he also offers protection, food and safe shelter. Nayar states that, "Colonialism masked its exploitative structures under the guise of paternalistic benevolence, coding colonial domination as acts of generosity, reform, 'development', welfare and stability" (Nayar 35). Although Mr. Wonka is acting like their protector, in reality he is dominating and exploiting them and their resources to his gain. He gets cheap labor and unlimited cacao beans. Mr. Wonka expresses his concern for the Oompa Loompas; he is generous in offering all the chocolate they could possibly want. Naturally, the chocolate he offers is not the bitter cacao bean of their dreams, but an "improved" version of chocolate with sugar and milk added to make it taste better, further underscoring the idea that his knowledge and

[8] A system of ideas, values, and beliefs that we live by (Dahl 212).

[9] Anthropologist Baldwin Spencer, as introduced by Nayar on page 38, introduced the idea that the civilizing mission of the European colonialist was "based on the view that the native cultures could progress only through an *external* means."

tastes are superior to theirs. Mr. Wonka determines that they must be happier and better under his rule at the chocolate factory than they could possibly be under their Loompaland leader. Mr. Wonka fulfills the role as teacher, teaching them how to get cacao beans, speak English and work in the factory; as parent bringing them to safety at his factory and providing for them; and as master over them, smuggling them in crates and confining them to work for him in his factory, paying them in cacao beans that are useless as a means of exchange outside of the factory. The Oompa Loompas are completely under his power and at his mercy, forced to rely on him in a strange land for their subsistence and livelihood.

Can the Subaltern Find Their Voice

An interesting dichotomy worthy of noting is that although the Oompa Loompas depict the colonial subaltern on many levels being spoken for and led by the colonizer, Willie Wonka, there is one place where they have an active and effective voice. The Oompa Loompas teach lessons to the colonialists, represented by the guests of the Chocolate Factory, through their lyrics. At first the reader believes like Charlie's Grandpa Joe that "I think they're going to sing us a song" (Dahl 78), as in providing entertainment. Yet, while the rhythms and melodies of the Oompa Loompas' songs may be seen as simply entertainment, the lyrics give advice on parenting and other life lessons as illustrated, for example, in their song about the spoiled Veruca Salt, *"For though she's spoiled and dreadfully so/A girl can't spoil herself, you know/Who spoiled her, then? Ah, who indeed?/...Her loving parents MUM and DAD"* (117-118). The Oompa Loompas watch and observe the tourists while performing the work at the factory. From these observations they have learned and found they have a voice, masked as entertainment, where they can say what they observe. This may be seen as a flaw in the postcolonial theories found within this text, however, it may also be seen as the subaltern finding a way for their voice

to be heard in a new culture where they have been swept aside. This would support the notion that although the subaltern's voice may be suppressed by the Empire, and they may not be permitted expression of their voice, it does not mean they are inhuman or incapable, but are instead adaptable, able to learn and find a way to be heard.

Conclusion

Each of these stories, *Curious George, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *The Jungle Book*, whether in written, animated or motion picture form, has endeared itself to children and parents to this day, and maintains wide appeal to educators. In examining these texts and adaptations with a critical eye, revealing their examples of the negative aspects of colonial and postcolonial outcomes, I do not propose these texts should in any way be vilified. It is the brilliance of the ability of these texts to keep the interest of readers, far outliving most other children's texts, that these are effective teachers of postcolonial theories. They demonstrate elements of light-heartedness and creativity that hold the interests of individuals throughout generations of children, somehow maintaining relevance over decades of historical change. Part of what makes these literary texts timeless is the deeper meanings that cause the reader to think perhaps subconsciously of the underlying messages of cultural awareness, acceptance and empathy. It is in this light that I have selected to examine these books and film adaptations from a colonial and postcolonial perspective as a catalyst for teaching students about the colonial ideas of nation and the search for identity. These texts should not be altered or re-written to make them more politically correct. There are rich lessons within the text which can be unpacked by a conscientious reader or educator who knows what questions to ask of students, and who knows how to get them to think deeper and to challenge the text. These texts can open discussions of race, ethnicity, fairness, discrimination, empathy and kindness in an academic, non-threatening

environment. Children need not know they are learning specifically about postcolonial thought or participating in postcolonial discourse. Early education is about planting seeds, seeds of curiosity, seeds of familiarity, and seeds of increased sensitivity to a globalized nation. Children today live in a global world, not only a specific city or country. Their world and views can no longer be limited to their immediate society. Although modern travel, media and technology have brought the world literally to their fingertips, literature remains a timeless teacher. The texts of well-written, well-chosen books, combined with a committed teacher, will guide students effectively to concepts of colonialism and postcolonialism. When taught through story-telling texts, these concepts will continue to have staying-power through future generations.

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APPENDIX TO HONORS THESIS:

Decolonizing Childhood: Re-reading Curious George, Oompa Loompas, and the Jungle Book

Introduction to Postcolonial Pedagogy in the Elementary Classroom

Although Postcolonialism as a course of study is only slightly more than thirty years old, the foundation began generations ago. There have been many texts of children's literature, as stated in my thesis, that are rife with postcolonial undercurrents. I believe it is important to begin to include discussions of postcolonial theory in conjunction with the introduction of this literature to elementary school children. Our children are growing up in a vastly global economy, where foreign countries and cultures are at their doorstep every day. In order to deftly navigate this diversity and to develop the integrative skills that will be required of them in their future, the foundation of cultural acceptance and sensitivity needs to be set now, when they are young. If this foundation is set, they will be able to expand on their knowledge base and glean a greater understanding as they rise in their education and as these ideas grow more complex and deep. Unfortunately, our strict curriculum does not leave room for such teaching in the social studies standards. Teaching, however, requires creativity and higher level thinking. Using such teaching concepts, the only place these ideas can be taught and encouraged is in the English Language Arts curriculum. Although with the instructional text focus of the new Common Core Standards being adopted in the coming year in K-12 education, there is still room for fictional literature to inspire such creative thinking. Not only can these texts inspire creative thinking, but the Common Core Standards promote deeper thinking skills that fit perfectly with reading these texts in order to grasp the deeper meaning of postcolonial ideas.

This literature-based concept of teaching postcolonial ideas is supported by Gargi Thattacharyya in *Cultural Education in Britain: from the Newbolt Report to the National Curriculum,* where she states, "The encounter with difference, which literature can purportedly provide, is still seen as eliciting a moral education which consists of supplementing an existing experience of identity" (Thattacharyya 14). Literature can take children from a place of experience to identify other viewpoints, combining moral education with language arts education. In deciding whether or not to take on the challenge of studying these works of children's literature with the overarching purpose of teaching foundations of postcolonial thought, teachers may ask themselves the following: Will the reading of *Curious George,* by Margret and H.A. Rey, through the eyes of George, a monkey, help young children empathize with colonized people throughout the world? Could they liken the monkey to a colonized African boy being torn from his home and family and moved to a strange land? Will reading these same books with the concept of "the man with the yellow hat" as a European colonizer, provide perspective and potential understanding of the motives of colonizers? Is it possible that Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* speaks to students struggling with identity issues at a higher elementary level? Can discussions about the suppressive treatment of the Oompa Loompas in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* teach children that people who look different from them are just as human? Through close readings of these texts and modern literary analysis, I intend to show that the answer to these questions is a resounding "Yes!"

In any discussion using these texts it is my intent that the discussions will be deep and meaningful with thought-provoking questions. In his essay, *The Trouble with Multiculturalism*, Joseph Wagner says that when you can set aside your cultural biases and thinking patters when considering another culture, then you have a clearer understanding of other cultures, and further

states, "Critical history achieves value and unsettles the students' sense of self by presenting histories that oblige students to choose whether they identify with the settlers or the natives, the slaveholders or the slaves, the males or the females, the Catholics or the Protestants, the oligarchy or the revolutionaries, the aggressors or the victims" (420). Realizing that I am not proposing the teaching of critical history here, but instead the teaching of cultural understanding and sensitivity through theories of postcolonialism found in children's literature, this quote is accurate. In reading these stories to and with children, posing questions to them and giving them topics to write about that bring out scenarios that put them in the places of these characters, then I am asking them to choose who they identify with and why. There is a difference between asking a student, "What are the differences between living in a jungle and living in a city?" and "How do you think George felt when he was always surrounded by buildings and people in the city after being raised in a lush jungle?" In the former, students simply think of the jungle and think of the city while standing in their own place; but in the latter, students are required to put themselves in the jungle think of what that would be like, then transport themselves to the city to how that would feel and then compare the two. One inspires thought, the other inspires feelings. It is a deeper level of understanding than simply considering their circumstances, but actually putting them in the circumstances of the others. Why is this an important distinction to make? In the global world of this generation, multicultural tolerance will not be enough. There needs to be transcultural understanding. This distinction allows us to move to the background of postcolonial theory to deepen our understanding of the significance of the texts.

A few of my primary reasons in selecting these books and films are because they are stories with which we are all familiar and that we love, and also because students will read them at various levels, from second through fifth grades, the populations with which I will be

working. In terms of the latter point, I also make a further argument that, as teachers, we cannot introduce students to these concepts in one grade and drop them in another; instead, we must develop curricula throughout students' elementary school education. We must move beyond the Mayflower, black paper pilgrim hats, white paper collars and brown bag vests to give children a deeper understanding of each other.

Because of the nature of the literature, and the emphasis on writing and drawing inferences and meaning in the Common Core Standards, I propose the following as loosely structured lesson plans, open for adaptation, for various grade levels and using each of the three texts as analyzed.

Grade Three – *Curious George*

Approximately 5 day Lesson:

1. Over two days I would read and discuss the first two *Curious George* stories (*Curious George* and *Curious George Takes a Job*) and discuss at the end of each one, cultural nuances of home, identity and choices of George and the Man in the Yellow Hat, and how each of them impacts the other's life.
2. Day three I would read through a sample format poem of "If I Ruled the World" (there are a multitude of versions online). We would discuss the format of the poem and talk about a few ideas if we were to write the poem from the perspective of George or the Man in the Yellow Hat.
3. Day four I would group the students in 3's and give them 20 minutes to come up with their own version of "If I Ruled the World" from the perspective of either George or the Man in the Yellow Hat.

4. Day five I would have each group share their poem and have the class decide which character each poem was about and what clues gave it away.

Grade 4 – The Jungle Book

Week Long Lesson

1. I would divide the book into sections and perhaps read only certain sections of the book each day because they are quite independent of each other. Each day of reading would entail discussion questions such as: Is Mowgli fully accepted by the Wolf pack? Why or why not? How does Mowgli as a "man" help the wolves and how do the wolves as "animals" help Mowgli?
2. The last two days of the week, I would have the kids choose a discussion question to write a three paragraph essay on based on one of the chapters of the book, and draw one illustration to support that idea.

Grade 5 – Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Week long or longer lesson

1. We would read this book together as a read aloud in class in as many days as it takes to finish the book. I would spend extra time in discussion on the chapters highlighting the Oompa Loompas.
2. We would then spend two days watching just certain scenes of the Oompa Loompas from the 1971 and the 2005 film adaptations, taking notes as to how the Oompa Loompas were depicted.
3. The final two days I would have them first write a 5 paragraph essay comparing how the Oompa Loompas from all three sources – how they differed from one another and what similarities they had.

4. The final day I would have them draw in three frames their depictions from each of the three sources.

These would be displayed in the classroom.